



Samoan Circle Session Notes

Throughout the nation today people are in the streets protesting. Why is it so difficult to have a civil conversation to resolve our problems?

- Passion people feel about topics
- People have different world views, realities, personalities
- People are afraid they won't make their point; civil options may not be as effective
- Even the protests in New York didn't get any attention for the first few weeks
- People are in fear of the economy; we're in seemingly turbulent times – we don't have all the information
- Fear of losing power, so people are more concerned with remaining in power
- Ancient beliefs that we are either in love or fear; fear stops us from communicating
- Could a civil conversation win out? Would there be changes if people didn't get angry?
- We need to focus on what we have in common and not focus on what we lack
- We are not taught coping skills
- Need great leaders who can focus on the goals of protesters
- Leaders don't have enough information to be civil
- There is no common goal
- Protesters can get caught up in the emotion and forget the goal
- Civil conversations are not going to work for everybody – Hitler example
- People need a psychologically safe environment before they will speak
- Very limited practice at speaking and writing
- Fear of repercussions
- Shallow diet of information from media
- We haven't been fed anything that is civil
- We need to learn how to be civil
- People don't know how to listen; mob mentality is because they don't think anyone is listening to them
- Even in staff meetings, some people are attentive and others are not
- There are too many distractions that make listening and being attentive difficult
- In-person conversations happen less often in the digital age
- The younger generation are using the digital tools to communicate with each other and their legislators; they are doing what they know how to do
- Media representations of communicating have changed from Leave it to Beaver to Rosanne
- We need more interpersonal interaction without the digital tools
- Continuum for discourse from civil to uncivil; too much of the popular modeling is a dysfunctional model; we're saturated with it and we internalize it

- What is definition of civil? Definition has changed over time. What was civil in 1950s may not be what is civil today.
- We're seeing frustration of an ignored generation
- Listening is absorbing what someone says whether in person or by text, etc
- People feel shut down, unheard, depressed, fearful – everyday headlines are a constant stream of negative stories
- You have to meet others' communications, but what about them meeting yours? Why should I have to put up with being cussed out?
- We leave civil discourse when we use loaded discourse on purpose; our words can inflame others
- Congress is not listening to the problems
- People are too busy working or trying to find work
- Streets look good to people who have been out of work for six months
- People have been taking to the streets for generations
- It takes an extreme to bring us back to the middle
- Disorderly behavior does not lead to civility
- Congress can be mean and uncivil too
- Need to educate people on how to do things properly
- Need better prepared parents, teachers and students
- Education is key
- Need to raise expectations
- We can't be assumptive about what people know
- Need community based instruction

Technique discussion

How do you handle someone who won't give up their chair?

As a moderator, you might need to ask them to make room for others

Do you actively moderate people who are more disruptive?

Sometimes people just want to be heard. Make rule that people have to allow each other talk separately, not at the same time.

We all have stereotypes that we have to get over.

This issue is too general and unsolvable to provide a real example of how this technique might work in other situations. I think this would be valuable with a specific objective.

This could be a comfortable space to express opinions.

Sometimes identifying the issue is an important part of the issue. We identified a lot of subtopics to the issue.

I caught myself wanting to interrupt, but asked myself if it was important enough to get into the circle.

This process might help diffuse anger from people who didn't get their way.